

DIRECT CERTIFICATION FACT SHEET

Direct Certification (DC) – Once identified in the [STN Application Center](#), through a state or local homeless/migrant liaison, or through a letter from a state agency or court, students are automatically eligible for free or reduced meals for the school year and 30 operating days into the next school year (or until a new DC determination is made or a F/R Application is approved).

Direct Certification in STN Application Center Procedure

1. Schools must log into the STN Application Center with a username and password.
 - a. Username/password can be obtained by your school's Application Center Administrator
2. After logging in, the Dashboard is the next page with a blue box for Direct Certification, purple box for Direct Verification, green box for Upload Center, and yellow box for File Manager.
3. After clicking on the blue box (Direct Certification) click on Download Matches to the left.
4. Select the Match Type that you prefer – All Matches or New Matches Only.
5. Click Download Standard Matches in the lime green box. (After going through this process for Standard Matches, you can follow the same process for "No-County Matches" in the yellow box.)
6. The report will download and either pop up as a download or the site will take you back to the Dashboard. If you arrive at the Dashboard, click on the yellow box (File Manager).
7. Identify the first report you ran that day and click on the file. This will download as an Excel spreadsheet.
8. Review the names listed on the spreadsheet, ensure that the students matched are actually enrolled at your school. There should be multiple identifiers that confirm the identities of the students.
9. For documentation purposes, save this spreadsheet. Be sure to include the date this match was processed.
10. Contact your F/R software system to learn how to upload this information. For schools that do not use a F/R software system, compare this list with your enrollment lists and make sure to change the student's eligibility category if they were not previously marked as DC Free or DC Reduced.

Best Practices

- ✓ While USDA requires schools to run a DC match at least 3 times a school year, schools are recommended to run a DC match once a month.
- ✓ Schools must keep track of how students are eligible for DC status (view column U of the match list):
 - F – SNAP/Food Stamps
 - A – TANF
 - W – Foster
 - M – Medicaid Free
 - R – Medicaid Reduced
- ✓ When finding students in the STN App Center, schools should extend eligibility to all other students in the household – except when students are identified in DC because of Foster status. Make sure to document extended benefits.
- ✓ DC status stays with the student wherever they go. So if a DC student moves into another household, their eligibility stays with them and extends to others in the household. If eligible because of Foster status, this benefit would not extend to others in the household.
- ✓ Conduct DC Look-Up on any application submitted with a 10-digit case number or the Foster box checked.
 - If you find them through DC Look-Up, then the student(s) is automatically DC. Print a copy of the DC Look-Up Match, retain on file and disregard the application.
 - If you cannot find them through DC Look-Up, then approve the application based on face value and then verify the application for cause.

Effective Date Waiver for Direct Certification

- Beginning July 1, 2017 schools will be able to apply for an Effective Date Waiver for Direct Certification.
- A DC Match List or DC Look-Up might show that a student was eligible in previous months before being identified as DC by the school.
- This waiver will give schools the ability to retroactively apply DC benefits to those students.

Requirements for Implementing the Effective Date Waiver

1. The waiver must be applied to all students, not just those with a large balance.
2. Schools can only retroactively claim DC benefits for the months that are still revisable in the CNPweb (60 day claim period).
 - a. For instance if the student was identified by the school in the STN App Center in May, but the DC database shows the student was eligible for DC benefits beginning in January, the school could only go back to the March claim to revise the meal counts.
3. Refund any money paid and/or forgive accrued debt on behalf of the student for reimbursable meals received only during the period from the free or reduced meal eligibility effective date through the date the direct certification is applied at the local school. Refunds do not apply to la carte items and reimbursable meals purchased before the student was eligible for benefits.
4. Refunds can be paid from the non-profit school food service fund for adjustments of any money paid by or on behalf of the student for reimbursable meals during the period from the free or reduced meal eligibility effective date through the date the direct certification is actually implemented at the local school, including forgiving accrued debt, if the SFA submits a revised claim for reimbursement; debt accrued before the student was eligible for benefits, including reimbursable meals and a la carte purchases, must be collected or written off through nonfederal sources.
5. If categorical eligibility is based on SNAP, TANF or Medicaid, the extended eligibility provision in 7 CFR 245.6(b)(7) also applies.
6. Document the effective date used, such as a date stamp, to document the date lists or letters from other agencies were received by the SFA, or the documented and traceable date the student's record first appeared on the automated data matching file from the appropriate agency (i.e. FSSA).
7. Documentation for each student refund must include calculations used to show how the amount was determined and which funds were used (i.e. non-profit food service, general, or other).

Schools are not required to implement the Effective Date Waiver. If they choose not to implement this waiver then DC benefits can only start the beginning of the month that the student was identified DC eligible by the school. For example, if the student was identified on May 16 for DC eligibility, then the school could go back to May 1 and apply DC eligibility. If the student was charged anything from May 1-15, then that amount should be refunded. To apply for the Effective Date Waiver for DC, [click here](#).

Resources for Direct Certification

- Eligibility Guidance Manual: <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/nutrition/sp50cacfp19sfsp172016a-eligibility-guidance-manual.pdf>
- F/R Approval Fact Sheets (including Foster, SNAP and TANF, Homeless and Migrant): <http://www.doe.in.gov/nutrition/free-and-reduced-fact-sheets-and-training>
- Direct Certification Guidance: <http://www.doe.in.gov/nutrition/direct-certification-help-resources>